

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as indicated below.

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A method for the heat treatment of solids containing titanium, in which fine-grained solids are treated at a temperature of 700 to approximately 950°C in a fluidized bed reactor, comprising introducing the solids into the reactor, introducing a first gas or gas mixture from below through at least one gas supply tube into a mixing chamber of the reactor located above the upper orifice region of the gas supply tube, the gas supply tube being at least partly surrounded by a stationary annular fluidized bed which is fluidized by supplying fluidizing gas, wherein the gas flowing through the gas supply tube entrains solids from the fluidized bed into the mixing chamber when passing through the upper orifice region of the gas supply tube, and adjusting the gas velocities of the first gas or gas mixture as well as of the fluidizing gas for the annular fluidized bed such that the particle Froude numbers in the gas supply tube are between 1 and 100, in the annular fluidized bed between 0.02 and 2 and in the mixing chamber between 0.3 and 30, and removing the treated solids from the reactor.

Claim 2 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the particle Froude number in the gas supply tube lies between 1.15 and 20.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the particle Froude number in the annular fluidized bed is between 0.115 and 1.15.

Claim 4 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the particle Froude number in the mixing chamber is between 0.37 and 3.7.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the bed height of solids in the reactor is adjusted such that the annular fluidized bed extends at least partly beyond the upper orifice end of the gas supply tube.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the gas supply tube is provided with apertures on its shell surface.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the fine-grained solids comprise ilmenite and is reduced in the reactor.

Claim 8 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein hydrogen-containing gas is supplied to the reactor.

Claim 9 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in claim 8, wherein hydrogen-containing gas with a hydrogen content of 75 to 100%, is introduced into the reactor through the gas supply tube and/or into the annular fluidized bed.

Claim 10 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in claim 8 wherein the hydrogen-containing gas contains between 0 and 5% of water vapor and between 5 and 10% of nitrogen.

Claim 11 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed Claim 8, wherein the hydrogen-containing gas is introduced into the reactor with a temperature of between 820 and 900°C.

Claim 12 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein at least part of the exhaust gas of a second reactor, provided downstream of the reactor, is passed through the gas supply tube into the reactor.

Claim 13 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the amount of iron contained in the solids is reduced in the reactor to at least 70%.

Claim 14 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in Claim 12, wherein the amount of iron contained in the solids is reduced in the downstream second reactor to at least 90%.

Claim 15 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein following re-processing by separation of the solids, cooling and separation of the water, at least part of the exhaust gas of the reactor is heated up and supplied to the annular fluidized bed through a conduit.

Claim 16 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in Claim 12, wherein a cooling stage for the solids is provided downstream of the second reactor.

Claim 17 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in Claim 12, wherein a separating stage for separating the solids from the exhaust gas is respectively provided downstream of both the reactor and the second reactor, and wherein the separated solids are at least partly supplied to the respective stationary fluidized beds of the reactors.

Claim 18 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the fine-grained solids comprise ilmenite and is magnetically roasted in the reactor.

Claim 19 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in claim 18, wherein fuel, which by its combustion with an oxygen-containing gas generates at least part of the amount of heat required for the thermal treatment, is supplied to the reactor.

Claim 20 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in Claim 18, wherein gaseous fuel is introduced through lances or the like into both the mixing chamber and the annular fluidized bed and/or is introduced through a conduit into the gas supply tube and from there together with oxygen-containing gas is introduced into the reactor, and wherein compressed ambient air or pre-

heated air is introduced as fluidizing gas via a supply conduit and a gas distributor into the annular fluidized bed.

Claim 21 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in Claim 18, wherein air, which is pre-heated, is introduced into the reactor through the gas supply tube.

Claim 22 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in Claim 18, wherein solids are removed from the annular fluidized bed and supplied to a cooling stage in which the solids are subjected both to a cooling medium and to a downstream separator.

Claim 23 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in Claim 18, wherein at least part of the exhaust gas of the reactor is largely separated from solids in a downstream separator and supplied to a pre-heating stage upstream of the reactor equipped with a dryer and a separator for drying and pre-heating the solids to be supplied to the reactor.

Claim 24 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein the solids separated from the exhaust gas in the downstream separator are supplied to the annular fluidized bed and/or to the suspension heat exchanger.

Claim 25 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in Claim 18, wherein the solids removed from the reactor are supplied after a first cooling stage or directly to a further cooling stage, which has a fluidized injection cooler and/or fluidized bed cooler.

Claim 26 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein the solids are cooled to below 300°C in the injection cooler by injecting water and are cooled to a further processing temperature in the fluidized bed coolers by water passed counter-currently through cooling coils.

Claim 27 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in claim 25 wherein the exhaust gas of the further cooling stage and the exhaust gas of the separator of the pre-heating stage are supplied to a further separator, and wherein the solids separated in the further separator are supplied to one of the fluidized bed coolers.

Claim 28 (Currently Amended): A plant for the heat treatment of solids containing titanium comprising a fluidized bed reactor, wherein the reactor comprises at least one gas supply tube being at least partly surrounded by an annular chamber in which a stationary annular fluidized bed is located, and a mixing chamber being located above the upper orifice region of the gas supply tube, wherein the gas flowing through the gas supply tube entrains solids from the stationary annular fluidized bed into the mixing chamber when passing through the upper orifice region of the gas supply system, the plant further comprising a solids separator downstream of the reactor, wherein the solids separator comprises a solids conduit leading to the annular fluidized bed of the reactor and a solids conduit leading to a stationary fluidized bed of a second reactor provided downstream.

Claim 29 (Previously Presented): The plant as claimed in claim 28, wherein the gas supply tube extends upwards substantially vertically from the lower region of the reactor into the mixing chamber of the reactor.

Claim 30 (Previously Presented): The plant as claimed in claim 28, wherein the gas supply tube is arranged approximately centrally with reference to the cross-sectional area of the reactor.

Claim 31 (Previously Presented): The plant as claimed in claim 28, further comprising in the annular chamber of the reactor a gas distributor which divides the chamber into an upper fluidized bed region and a lower gas distributor chamber, and wherein the gas distributor chamber is connected to a supply conduit for heated-up hydrogen-containing or fuel-containing fluidizing gas.

Claim 32 (Cancelled)

Claim 33 (Previously Presented): The plant as claimed in claim 32, further comprising a re-processing stage for the exhaust gas downstream of the solids separator.

Claim 34 (Previously Presented): The plant as claimed in Claim 32, further comprising a second reactor downstream of the reactor, wherein the second reactor comprises a downstream solids separator, the exhaust gas of which is passed via a supply conduit into the fluidized bed of the first reactor.

Claim 35 (Previously Presented): The plant as claimed in Claim 28, wherein the reactor comprises a conduit leading to the gas supply tube and/or to a supply conduit for fuel leading to a lance arrangement which opens out into the annular fluidized bed.

Claim 36 (Previously Presented): The plant as claimed in claim 32, further comprising upstream of the reactor a pre-heating stage for the solids, the dryer of which is connected to the exhaust-gas conduit of the downstream separator, and further comprising a cooling stage downstream of the reactor comprising an exhaust-gas conduit connected to the gas supply tube.

Claim 37 (Previously Presented): The plant as claimed in claim 36, further comprising at least one cooling stage downstream of the reactor.

Claim 38 (Previously Presented): The plant as claimed in claim 28, further comprising a solids separator downstream of the reactor, wherein the solids separator has a solids conduit leading to a stationary fluidized bed of a second reactor provided downstream.